



KŪKULU KE EA A KANALOĀ

KAHOʻOLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

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COMMISSION MEMBERS

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JONATHAN CHING, D.ARCH
HŌKŪLANI HOLT
CARMEN HULU LINDSEY
SAUMALU MATAAFA
MICHELLE PESCAIA

Michael K. Nāhoʻopiʻi
Executive Director

Testimony of MICHAEL K. NĀHOʻOPTI Executive Director

Before the Senate Committee on

WATER & LAND

**Monday, February 3, 2020
1:15 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

In consideration of SENATE BILL 3094 RELATING TO KAHOʻOLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

Senate Bill 3094 appropriates funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the operations of the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission and for 2 full time equivalent positions on the Commission. The Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) strongly supports this measure.

Since the end of the Navy's unexploded ordnance cleanup in 2004, the KIRC has begun a race against time to stem erosion and further degradation of the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve. The KIRC has since initiated numerous restoration projects, financed by state funds and various grant opportunities, that has made significant changes to transforming the desolate hardpan into vibrant living landscapes.

The KIRC first began receiving state general funds in the administration's budget in the fiscal year 2018-2019 biennium budget. The initial funding supported 15 FTE staff and operating funds for our Maui office and Kihei Boathouse. In fiscal years 2019 and 2020, the KIRC Cultural Resource Project Coordinator position was restored and \$100,000 in operating funds were added. The provided support has helped our efforts, but in order to effectively continue on-island operations, additional funds are necessary. The KIRC is requesting additional operating funds and personnel to support our efforts to restore the island, protect endangered and rare flora and fauna and ensure the safety of visitors to Kahoʻolawe.

The key to the KIRC's restoration efforts are the many volunteers that we bring to Kahoʻolawe to help with native out plantings, erosion control construction and invasive weed eradication. The additional funds will finance key support services such as operating the Kahoʻolawe base camp facilities, generating power and water, and maintaining vital infrastructure, equipment and vehicles. The additional funds will also support critical safety systems such as medical supplies, safety equipment and emergency transportation.

The additional KIRC positions are critically vital as the KIRC has observed a recent increase in unpredictability and severity of weather and ocean conditions in the waters surrounding Maui and Kaho`olawe most likely due to climate change and global warming, which has resulted in an increase need for additional manpower to safely and effectively operate the KIRC ocean vessel. Additionally, our Kaho`olawe field teams also need additional field support as we have been successful in expanding our restoration efforts to create more native dryland forest habitats, expand beach restoration and shoreline protection efforts, cultivate food sustainability and increase on-island water generation, collection, storage and distribution systems.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 8:28:03 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
JOHN BRAUM	Testifying for Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club	Support	No

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3094

2/1/2020

Dear Chairs and committee members:

In October 2019, fourteen of us trail clearers from the Hawaii Trail and Mountain Corp. were privileged to spend a 4-day service trip to Kaho'olawe as guests of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission ("KIRC"). Please be informed that we fully support HB 1880. We are extremely impressed with the professionalism, dedication, cultural knowledge, enthusiasm, ingenuity, frugality, performance and hospitality of the KIRC staff. Mr. Paul Higashino was an outstanding example of those qualities.

Before the trip, we attended an excellent orientation to educate us about Kaho'olawe and to prepare us for the service trip. It was conducted by Mr. Mike Nahoopii, KIRC's executive director. On the first day of the trip, we participated in a brief chant to show our respect for the island. This was an interesting start. During our stay, we removed (by the roots) a large grove of invasive koa haole trees. We were also shown historical sites, learned about the island's native culture and witnessed innovative plant restoration techniques. The staff's knowledge and resourcefulness are impressive. Old donated china dishes, remnant rope, rocks and branches are used as windbreaks and as soil and moisture catchments for newly planted seeds and seedlings on extremely hard, barren and windswept grounds. It was amazing to see how these seemingly simple techniques could restore plant life in such a hostile environment. We are impressed by how the staff constantly strives to improve and develop new plant growing methods using simple materials coupled with a big dose of creativity, hard work and common sense.

The entire operation is also an excellent example of how self-sufficiency can work. Solar power, desalination for potable water, composting outhouses, water catchments, recycling waste, etc. Nothing seems to go to waste. Very impressive and encouraging.

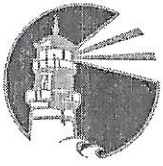
Finally, we would like to thank the Legislature for creating and supporting such a worthwhile and valuable KIRC program. You have every reason to be proud of what you are accomplishing through KIRC. Not only are you having a positive impact in restoring Kaho'olawe's environment and culture, but many of the agricultural techniques being used and developed by the program will someday, if not already, be useful throughout the state particularly in arid and denuded areas. The same can be said of its self-sufficiency example.

Very truly yours,

John Braum

Vise President

Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club



Ocean Tourism Coalition

The Voice for Hawaii's Ocean Tourism Industry
1188 Bishop St., Ste. 1003**Honolulu, HI 96813-2938
(808) 537-4308 Phone (808) 533-2739 Fax
timlyons@hawaiiantel.net

COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

Senator Kaiali'i Kahele, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Monday, February 3, 2020
TIME: 1:15 P.M.
PLACE: Conference Room 229

TESTIMONY OF THE OCEAN TOURISM COALITION IN SUPPORT OF SB3094

Dear Senator Kahele, Chair; Senator Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair and Members of WTL Committee:

My name is James E. Coon, President of the Ocean Tourism Coalition (OTC). The OTC represents over 300 small ocean tourism businesses state wide. Most of these are family businesses which are locally owned and operated. Many of them have been in business for several decades and are an important and valued part of their respective communities. Most of these businesses operate from State Boating Facilities.

While this proposed legislation does not directly impact our industry we believe that the restoring, preserving and the determining appropriate uses of Kaho'olawe is important to everyone who calls Hawaii home.

It is our opinion that KIRK should be supported by the General tax revenue.

Please pass SB 3094 It is the right thing to do to help restore and manage Kaho'olawe.

Sincerely,

James E. Coon, President

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 12:47:11 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carmela Noneza	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 12:47:25 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dean Tokishi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and committee members, I support this measure to provide additional financial and staff support for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission. They have taken the lead in demonstrating that it is possible to reverse ecological damage after years of neglect and abuse, to preserve our native cultural history for future generations and to connect our residents with the healing of Kaho`olawe through meaningful and safe work on the island.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 12:48:33 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Matt Hatakeyama	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 12:54:46 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
grant Thompson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 1:03:25 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Janeece Beauchamp	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 1:29:21 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Courtney Kerr	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support Bill 3094.

Kaho'olawe is an island like no other: covered with history, culture and life. Kaho'olawe provides a safe haven for many species including endangered sea birds and Monk Seals. The KIRC protects and restores Kaho'olawe not only for the people of Hawai'i now, but also for future generations. The KIRC has many great achievements on the island, but are restricted by money and staff, with currently only 5 field crew taking out the many volunteers every month. This bill would allow more restoration to the damaged island and protect it for posterity.

Courtney Kerr

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 1:33:28 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Cassandra L. Smith	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in support of SB3094. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

- Cassie Smith

My name is Terri Gavagan and I am writing in support of SB 3094 RELATING TO THE KAHOOLOWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION. I ask you to support this important measure to provide financial support and stability of the restoration and protection of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve, which will benefit all of Hawai'i's people for generations to come. My family has been greatly changed by Kaho'olawe. It has influenced my teenage daughter's decision to eventually become a marine biologist and eventually work to protect Kaho'olawe's precious marine resources. She is currently working toward her dream at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

This funding and the requested positions of KIR Specialists will help the KIRC maintain its current operations to protect and restore Kaho'olawe as well as to provide safe and meaningful access to the Reserve.

Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 2:20:19 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lopaka White	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 2:29:33 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Chris Berle	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs & Committee Members,

I support this measure to provide additional funding and staff support for Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission.

I feel that it is important to restore Kaho'olawe to the best possible condition that the Reserve Commission can. Without the state, county, and community support, Kaho'olawe will remain a constant reminder of the tragedy that was bestowed upon it.

Yes, the current islands that are inhabited have their own issues, which grow greater every day, but we shouldn't ignore part of the native lands because it doesn't have an ABC store on it, and tourists don't visit it, that would be like ignoring your own son or daughter because they didn't get a law degree or PHD after you let their step dad beat on them as a child. ALL of the lands are special, and should be treated as so.

Please allow the Kaho'olawe Reserve Commission continue their efforts to bring back to life a once beaten child of Hawaii.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your consideration,

Chris Berle

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 2:31:36 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
pookela hanson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this measure to provide resources for KIRC. Support for the island is needed more than ever as volunteers are beginning to see the hard work and love flourish on the island. Your decisions will have long-lasting effects on our home, our islands, and keiki. Please support the work and people that continue to do good safe work on Kaho'olawe and perpetuate our aina for future generations.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 3:09:08 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
George	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

January 31, 2020**Aloha Chairs and Committee Members,****We support this measure to provide additional financial and staff support for the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission.**

There is a strong need and urgency to clean up the ecological damage that has occurred after years of neglect and abuse from the Island being used as a test area for ordinance testing. KIRC has taken on the task to lead this effort and has demonstrated an expertise and willingness to restore and preserve the rich native cultural history for future generations of the Hawaiian people. KIRC's efforts continue to connect the residents of Hawaii with the healing of Kaho'olawe through meaningful and safe work on the Island.

The support that the Senate has given to KIRC in the past and continues to give for the future, has been and is much appreciated.

Mahalo,**George and Cathy Deshaies****deshaies@buffalo.edu**

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 4:59:06 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Roy Alameida	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha kakou,

I support the measure to support for additional financial and staff to care for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission. They have taken the lead in demonstrating that it is possible to reverse ecological damage after years of neglect and abuse, to preserve our native cultural history for future generations and to connect our residents with the healing of Kaho`olawe through meaningful and safe work on the island. I am grateful for having the opportunity to add my "hands" to support the "rebirth" of the island.

Mahalo,

Roy Alameida

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 5:12:42 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dr. Betsy Fisher	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB3094

1/27/2020

Dear Chairs and committee members:

I fully support SB3094. In October 2019, I joined a volunteer group for a 4-day service trip to Kaho'olawe as guests of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission ("KIRC"). The KIRC staff with whom I worked was professional, knowledgeable, affable, and highly skilled. In particular, Mr. Paul Higashino was extremely helpful.

An educational pre-trip event prepared me for the service trip. Mike Nahoopii of KIRC was the speaker. The ingenuity of all who worked with KIRC was impressive. We worked planting and eradicating invasive plants. So much work is yet to be done, so much ordinance remains.

A big mahalo to the Legislature for supporting such a critical program. KIRC is doing a fine job and continued funding is imperative.

with aloha,

Dr. Betsy Fisher

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 5:43:16 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Andrew Fox	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha kakou! Please support SB 3094 to provide ongoing funding to KIRC to allow them to restore the ecological balance on Kahoolawe. Climate change is triggering similar (but less severe) devastation on many of the islands, abetted by wildfires and the years of grazing and deforestation. KIRC is leading the way on novel approaches to restoration in some of the most extreme situations, and all the islands need their experience and to benefit from their accomplishments. Keep the cycle going! Support SB 3094!

SB-3094

Submitted on: 1/31/2020 5:49:52 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Michele McLean	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kahele, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran and Members of the Committee on Water and Land,

Please support SB3094 to provide \$500,000 in operating funds to the Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) and \$72,000 for two additional personnel.

As a former KIRC chairperson, commissioner and staff member, I can attest that any funding for KIRC is money well spent. It is amazing how much the KIRC can do with so little money and so few staff. By relying on volunteers, meaningful restoration work continues on Kahoolawe each month, while hundreds of people from throughout Hawaii each year are able to experience the rewards of helping to transform a former bombing range to thriving native ecosystems. Even more important is the pure opportunity that Native Hawaiians have to connect with and practice their culture, many for the first time.

Thank you for your support of Kahoolawe, KIRC and SB3094.

Mahalo,

Michele McLean, AICP

Planning Director, Maui County

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 7:04:09 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and committee members, As someone who has worked on Kaho'olawe Island, I am in support of SB3094 to provide additional financial and staff support for the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. Kaho'olawe Island is a wonderful asset of the State of Hawai'i. It's management of cultural and natural resources is extraordinary and performed with well-qualified individuals. Our future keiki will be proud of this unique legacy of Hawai'i that we are leaving them. Please pass SB3094. Mahalo.

Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 7:14:28 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
johann winkler	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and committee members, I support this measure to provide additional financial and staff support for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission. They have taken the lead in demonstrating that it is possible to reverse ecological damage after years of neglect and abuse, to preserve our native cultural history for future generations and to connect our residents with the healing of Kaho`olawe through meaningful and safe work on the island.

Dear Elected Official and Policy Maker,

I am writing to you today, in concern for the funding for Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. I stand in full support of Director Michael Naho'opi'i, and his efforts to sustain the KIRC funding.

I find myself disheartened, when I see that he must consistently struggle to find funding for the important conservation and ecological work, that must take place on Kaho'olawe, due to devastating destruction by the Navy.

KIRC desperately needs your help securing appropriations for supplies, man power, and maintenance of motorized vehicular transportation for use both at sea, and on land.

KIRC constantly needs funds for the following reasons, to buy the supplies needed to maintain planting restoration and conservation efforts, to maintain housing facilities of staff and volunteers, to supply food and basic survival materials for the workers and volunteers, and to be able to all maintain mechanical workings that keep the jobs running, not to mention countless other costs that accrue when restoring an entire island.

I am asking you, as my elected representative, to hear me now, and pass this message on to the people you work with. Go to them, and describe KIRC's yearly, no, daily plight, to secure funding for these and more important items. Please be the person that I am glad I voted for, and use your persuasive powers to reach across party lines, to get all legislators to cast their votes for any and all bills, that protect the status quo, and/or increase the funding for Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. Please make informed speeches to colleagues, and hold discussions with your peers, to explain why KIRC needs to keep a personnel team of highly qualified professionals. Elaborate when necessary, that these are the people who staff the core team, responsible for keeping the island in the positive direction toward a goal of total restoration.

It is important to continue to provide funding that enables KIRC to invite teams of volunteers to Kaho'olawe. Their volunteer program provides a necessary part of the work force on the island. A steady flow of these volunteers is imperative to keep in order for KIRC to accomplish the goals they have set. Volunteers work with the staff, to perform the laborious tasks of repairing the

island. As a volunteer, I am devoted to the health of these Hawaiian Islands, and I possess the love for Kaho'olawe, as do countless others. Our families are witnesses to the action we take today, and for generations to come. Please do your part to honor the will of future generations who strive to repair the island from the devastation. Hawaiians were witnesses to its destruction and are the resource of volunteers who feels the urgency to take part in its restoration.

Therefore, I am urging you to **vote in support of Bill HB1880**, and get involved in helping KIRC's scientists, cultural practitioners, Hawaiian people, passionate natural conservationists like myself, and countless talented people, who vow to do whatever it takes to restore Kaho'olawe Island to its natural condition: flourishing in native Hawaiian flora and fauna.

Thank you for reading my letter of concern. Please vote in support of KIRC's quest for financial security at every opportunity. I know I will be observing your courage and fortitude in our futures.

Sincerely,

Pamela Zirker

6406 Kawaihau Rd.

Kapa'a, Kaua'i, HI,

96746

Phone (808) 821-1350

Aloha Chair and Committee Members of the Water and Land Committee,

I fully support SB 3094 which would provide financial and staff support for the Kaho‘olawe Island and Reserve Commission. The restoration and preservation of Kaho‘olawe’s cultural, archaeological, and ecological environments is imperative in assuring its existence for future generations.

I would like to share a personal story coming from the perspective of an aerial photographer currently working on a large photographic body of work documenting the anthropogenic impact and climate change happening here in Hawai‘i.

In August 2019 I received permission from the KIRIC commission to visit Kaho‘olawe in order to historically document from the air the archaeological, cultural and environmental landscapes of the island. During our over flight, photographer Bruce Omori and I were accompanied by Eric Brudage ZAPATA’s General Manager Manager, Pacific division. Mr. Brudage provided us with insight on the historical perspective and landmarks, as well as the current restoration efforts that were in the process. We were amazed to see how effective the planned plantings were in fighting the erosion and abuse that was inflicted on Kaho‘olawe. In my research I knew what Kaho‘olawe looked like in the 1990’s just as the restoration was beginning. The abuse of the land was haunting, and the restoration was indeed a daunting one. As I looked at Kaho‘olawe that August day, I was astonished and filled with hope at what I was documenting. I could see if given more time and resources how Kaho‘olawe could once again be restored to its former beauty.

It is very clear that the KIRC has been diligent in taking the lead in reversing the ecological damage/abuse that has been inflicted on its sacred landscapes. Kaho‘olawe is a story of hope and what can be accomplished when we work together. It is my hope that you will vote to support the financial and staffing needs to continue the important work that KIRC is doing on Kaho‘olawe - for its future and for future generations.

For Kaho‘olawe,

Leslie Gleim

Below are images photographed from that day.



SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 5:53:42 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Honorable Chairs and Committee Members,

I would like to add my support for Senate Bill 3094 to provide additional funding and staff support for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission. I lived on Maui back when the island was being bombed and I have since had the opportunity to go to Kaho'olawe as a volunteer to work on reversing the immense ecological damage that was caused. I am very impressed by the work being done by KIRC and hope it can continue.

Thank you for your consideration and attention,

Melissa Barker, Kauai Resident

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 6:45:15 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Stephen Louis Paulmier	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs
and
committee
members, I
support this
measure to
provide
additional
financial and
staff support
for the
Kaho`olawe
Island
Reserve
Commission.
They have
taken the lead
in
demonstrating
that it is
possible to
reverse
ecological
damage after
years of
neglect and
abuse, to
preserve our
native
cultural
history for
future
generations
and to

connect our
residents with
the healing
of
Kaho`olawe
through
meaningful
and safe work
on the island.

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/1/2020 8:16:26 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Donna Grabow	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this to Senate Bill, to give more support to Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission in order for the Commision to preserve Kanaka Maoli history, and to give citizens the opportunity to go to Kaho`olawe, and connect by working on the island, and help the land recover from bombing.

LATE

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/2/2020 7:02:47 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carol Marie Lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 7:17:00 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lyman L. Abbott	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB 3094 as I work on Kaho`olawe in the Restoration Department as a Natural Resources Specialist III. Thank you, Lyman L. Abbott

LATE

SB-3094

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 11:09:41 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/3/2020 1:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sarah Balmilero	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and Committee Members, thank for considering testimony on SB3094 “Relating to the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission.” My name is Sarah Balmilero and I am a graduate student in UH Mānoa’s Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work. I am here as an individual to testify in support of SB3094, which will provide additional financial and staff support for the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission, also known as KIRC.

In past history, as we know, the entire island of Kaho`olawe was used as a training ground and bombing range by the Armed Forces of the United States for half a century. Out of the innumerable tests and detonations, the three conducted in 1965 during Operation Sailor Hat were certainly the most damaging. While trying to determine the effects of a nuclear weapons blast, three explosions were set off, each containing 500 tons of conventional TNT. With an effect equivalent to a 1 kiloton TNT nuclear weapon, the blasts created huge craters on the island and most likely cracked the island’s water table, causing extensive groundwater loss (McGregor, 2007). Year after year, topsoil eroded away and endemic flora and fauna were lost. Along with ecosystem decimation, Native Hawaiian cultural sites, shrines, and petroglyphs were also destroyed and access to the land or ocean around the island was not safe.

After the death of two activists and the arrests of many others, live firing on Kaho`olawe ceased in 1990 and an effort to remove unexploded ordnance and environmental hazards was initiated (McGregor, 2007). Since this clearance did not completely remove all hazardous materials from the island and surrounding water, a level of danger still remains. Despite this and by state law, Kaho`olawe and its waters can now be used only for Native Hawaiian cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes, with all commercial uses prohibited (McGregor, 2007). With this access came the discovery that over 544 archaeological and historical sites had survived the years of bombing, which qualified the island to be added to the Nation Register of Historical Places.

During my high school years, I have had the incredible opportunity to attend access trips to Kaho`olawe with both the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission and Protect Kaho`olawe Ohana. The purpose of these accesses was to protect both natural and historical resources on the island through erosion control tactics, planting endemic vegetation, and revitalizing cultural practices. These opportunities had truly helped me to understand various protocols and nature-based connections that are central to the

well-being and cultural sustainability of the Hawaiian people. All in all, these experiences have allowed me to begin to find my place within our community and discover my own connection with spirituality.

The Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission has displayed leadership and initiative by demonstrating that it is possible to reverse ecological damage, even after years of neglect and abuse. KIRC is dedicated to preserving Native Hawaiian history and helps to connect residents like me with the healing of Kaho`olawe through meaningful and safe work that integrates a culturally competent perspectives into all programs and activities. Kaho`olawe is a sacred place that needs to be protected and I believe that SB3094 will help to ensure that the island is preserved and accessible for future generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Sarah Balmilero
Individual